



Acute sinusitis

Sinus Infection

Surprising Facts:

Most people who see a doctor for sinus symptoms do not have a sinus infection. Thick yellow or green mucus is normal as your body fights a virus—it does not mean you need an antibiotic.

What to do:

- Drink more water. Sip hot liquids.
- Use a humidifier and breathe moist air, as in a hot shower.
- Gently squirt salt water into the nose with a bulb syringe or ask an herbalist about a “neti pot.”
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve pain. Read the label for a child’s dose.
- Put moist, warm towels on the face.
- Try a decongestant for 2–3 days.

Call your doctor if:

- You have a fever and sinus pain when you lean forward.
- Symptoms do not improve after 10–14 days.

A sinus infection involves a build up of mucus in the sinuses.

There are several small chambers behind your cheeks and eyebrows, called sinuses. Most sinus infections start after a cold. Your body fights the cold virus by making mucus which helps wash the virus out of your nose and sinuses. The lining of the sinuses swells and the mucus is partly blocked. This is called sinusitis.

There are different kinds of sinusitis. Cold viruses are the most common cause. Smoking, allergies, using nasal sprays too much, swimming, even changes in air pressure, can lead to sinusitis. When mucus is blocked in a sinus passage, sometimes bacteria grow. Bacterial infections can cause sinus pressure, pain around the eyes when you lean forward, and fever. This is called acute bacterial sinusitis. A cold that starts to get better then gets worse may be a sign of acute bacterial sinusitis. Your health care provider may treat this kind of infection with an antibiotic. Antibiotics are used to kill bacteria.

Antibiotics do not work on all sinus problems. Many cases of sinusitis will get better on their own by using home remedies. Antibiotics don’t kill viruses, so they won’t make a cold go away any faster. Antibiotics often don’t help people who have ongoing or chronic sinusitis. Talk with your health care provider about whether you need an antibiotic. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you by creating stronger germs. It is best to take antibiotics only when needed. If your provider gives you antibiotics, always finish the entire prescription—the last few pills kill the toughest germs.

The best ways to prevent infections are to wash your hands and to stop smoking. Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. When blowing your nose, blow gently. If you stop smoking you can prevent many lung, nose, ear and sinus problems. People who smoke are much more likely to get colds and sinusitis.



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